

## New Community Center coming to Rushville

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Those turning the first shovels of dirt at Rush County's new REC Center were (left to right) Rush County Community Fo Executive Director Alisa Winters, Rushville Mayor Mike Pavey, Rush County ECDC Executive Director John McCane, GBE Committee citizen members Gerald Mohr, Dan Moster and Bill Herdrich. For additional photos see this story on our w Kevin Green | Daily News



RUSHVILLE – Local, regional and state representatives gathered Thursday afternoon for a groundbreaking ceremony for a new community center project. The new facility is the redevelopment of a 50,000 square foot former Walmart that closed in 2018.

The Rush County REC Center is a project that has been in discussion off and on for decades in Rush County.

The \$20 million redevelopment of the existing retail space along with 27,000 square feet of new construction will bring together local social services and fitness opportunities under one roof.

The Rush County REC Center (Recreation, Education and Collaboration), a multi-purpose community center, will become the new home of the Rushville Public Library, the Rush County Senior Center, the Rush County Community Assistance Food Pantry, ICAP, and other regional social services.

A new childcare facility will also be included in the REC Center along with fitness and other recreation opportunities including a new gymnasium and indoor swimming pool.

According to local officials, many people have worked for years to bring a community center to fruition. In late 2020, new life poured into the collective vision when the Rush County Community Foundation received a Large-Scale Community Leadership Grant of \$5 million through the seventh phase of Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow initiative.

“The generosity of Lilly Endowment has served as a catalyst to bring together years of local dreams and planning for the benefit of the county and the region,” said RCCF Director Chris May. “The commencement of this redevelopment, renovation, and new construction will do just that.”

The REC Center will be an all-in-one resource for many of the community's needs. It will house a fitness center, basketball court, walking/running track, indoor pool, and daycare center. It will also be the new, expanded home of the Rushville Public Library. There will be formal and informal meeting and gathering spaces for the community's use.

Additionally, the REC Center will serve as a coordinated hub for social service providers.

The Rush County Community Assistance food pantry will move into a larger, more welcoming space that will include a teaching kitchen. The Rush County Senior Citizens Center will also relocate. There will be offices for WIC (Women Infants and Children), ICAP (Interlocal Community Action Program), and Firefly Children & Family Alliance.

This project will address many of Rush County's most pressing issues, including food insecurity; convenient, comprehensive access to social services; and mental and physical health outcomes. Offering amenities will help retain and attract residents, stemming population decline. The REC Center will help fill a gap for affordable, high-quality childcare. The pool and fitness programs will improve overall health. The REC Center will offer experiences for everyone from infants to seniors.

"The original application to Lilly Endowment called for the construction in two phases; the social services being the first followed by a health and recreation phase," Rushville Mayor Mike Pavey said.

Pavey, who serves on the REC Center steering committee, continued to say the steering team subsequently determined the best option was to complete both phases at the same time.

Other funders include: the State of Indiana's READI initiative received through the Accelerate Rural Indiana regional coalition, Redevelopment Tax Credits issued by the State of Indiana, Rushville Public Library, City of Rushville, Rush County, Diamond Pet Foods, Gleaners Food Bank, the Herdrich family, and the Buchanan Family Foundation.

Rush County Economic Development Director and REC Center Chairman John McCane described his personal goal was to find the necessary funding to build the new facility with little to no debt service to the local taxpayers.

McCane stated that on Dec. 1, 2020, the project didn't have a penny donated to the cause. Since that time, the \$20 million for the construction is in the bank, which includes only 10% of taxpayer debt service.

“With construction costs realized, our next huge task is to work towards the long-term perpetuity of the REC Center,” said McCane. “We all realize the importance of continuing costs beyond construction and renovation. Our county is fortunate that Wilma Jo Kile established the Ebert H. and Bessie M. Schroeder Fund at RCCF, which will help to support the sustainability of the REC Center.”

McCane also announced that Rush Memorial Hospital has become one of the major naming partners for the REC Center.

Steering committee member Gerald Mohr said he believes the possibilities will be limited only by imagination.

“Collaboration between the partners will lead to creative and innovative opportunities to serve every citizen of the Rush County community. The REC Center will improve overall well-being and continue to transform Rush County for decades to come,” Mohr said.

## About the Rush County Community Foundation

The Rush County Community Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit public charity established to serve donors, award grants and scholarships, and provide leadership to enrich and enhance the quality of life in Rush County, Indiana, not only today, but for our future generations.

## About Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company.

Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location.

In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However, it maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.

## About READI

Launched by Gov. Holcomb and led by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, READI encourages regional collaboration and data-driven, long-term planning that will attract and retain talent in Indiana. The \$500 million READI fund was passed by legislation during the 2021 session and was divided among 17 regions.

Through READI, 17 regions across the state that represent all 92 counties are moving forward with projects and programs designed to enhance Indiana's regions for current and future generations of Hoosiers.

Collectively, the state's \$500 million investment is expected to yield an additional \$12 billion public, private and nonprofit dollars invested (19.72:1 investment leverage ratio) in enhancing Indiana's quality of life, quality of place and quality of opportunity.

During the 2023 legislative session, the Indiana General Assembly passed an additional \$500 million for READI 2.0.

## About Accelerate Rural Indiana

Accelerate Rural Indiana is a coalition of Batesville, Greensburg, Rushville and Shelbyville along with Decatur, Rush and Shelby counties, formed in 2021 to pursue Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) funding.

ARI was awarded \$20 million in READI funds, the highest per-capita READI award in the state. Collectively, ARI's \$20 million READI award is expected to attract nearly \$500 million in public, private and nonprofit dollars to the region.

ARI recently formed a Regional Development Authority (RDA) to administer ARI's current READI funds, seek additional READI funding, and pursue additional regionally impactful projects.

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